2/20/93 GT

UPDATE

Tom Kimmell/Gazette Telegraph

Tom Cross, a past president of the Colorado Bar Association, says the 12,000-member group may seek a new city for its annual convention.

Lawyers convention in jeopardy

Bar association seeks welcome letter from city

By **Jane Grandolfo**
Gazette Telegraph

The Colorado Bar Association may cancel its October convention in Colorado Springs if Mayor Robert Isaac doesn't sign a letter welcoming the group and its gay members, a representative said Friday.

The lawyers voted last month, after heated debate, to keep their annual meeting at The Broadmoor hotel. At the same time, they asked the city to extend an invitation saying it welcomed all of them — regardless of race, creed, color, sex, national origin, age, handicap, sexual orientation, religion or marital status.

Now they say the mayor is dragging his feet.

"We're not talking about legislation or an affirmative action program. We're talking about extending a welcome to a 12,000-member organization that has been coming to Colorado Springs for 70-plus years," said Tom Cross, a Colorado Springs lawyer and past president of the group.

Isaac, who supports Amendment 2, declined to be interviewed. A city spokesman said Isaac doesn't want to talk about the matter until it can be brought before the City Council.

Several bar association officials say they'll attend Monday's council meeting to lodge a formal request with the mayor in what could shape up as a power play over gay rights.

In one corner are lawyers who say Isaac shouldn't balk at such an innocuous request. On the other side are city officials, some of whom accuse the influential lawyers group of bully tactics. Caught in the middle is The Broadmoor hotel, which stands to lose at least $200,000 if the convention goes elsewhere.

"We (write) welcome letters all the time saying 'We're glad to have you in our fair city.' But to say you want a wel-

See **LAWYERS**/A3

■ Amendment 2 sponsors carry on fight in newsletter/**B10**

LIFESTYLE

What started out as a hobby for Dan Mad Trek" — is now a $1.5 million business for t official Star Trek fan club, based in Aurora. 50,000 members worldwide, light years ahea

WORLD

▶ **SPEEDY APPEALS URGED:** The Clinton ad- ministration called Friday for Israel to use its app late court process to speed the repatriation of de ported Palestinians from Lebanon./**A6**

STATE

▶ **BILL DEFEATED:** A bill calling for criminal pr ecution for the deaths of fetuses is rejected by a House committee./**B1**

CITY/REGION

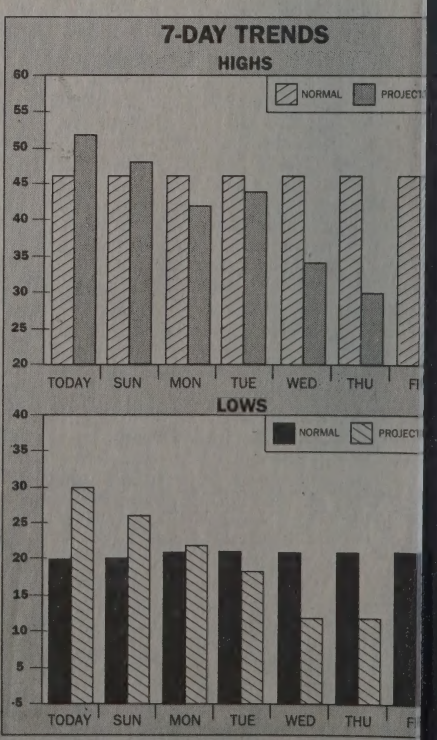
▶ **NO JUSTICE YET:** An Ohio woman hoping t see justice done in Colorado Springs on Friday ir stead will return home empty-handed./**B2**

OPINION

▶ **CLINTON PLAN:** Our new president has worked at least one miracle: several million Ame cans overnight have joined the ranks of the rich, writes columnist George Will./**B9**

LOCAL FORECAST

Today: Mostly cloudy, windy and mild. High 52.
Tonight: Partly cloudy and occasionally breezy. Lo
Sunday: Clouds and sunshine, windy and cooler. H 48, low 26.
Monday: Mostly cloudy and mainly dry. High 42, l
Tuesday: Mostly cloudy; chance of snow shower. 44, low 18.
Wednesday: Cloudy and colder; snow or flurries p High 34, low 12.



Lawyers/Association's president didn't expect such a flap

From A1

come letter that talks about sexual orientation I thought was more than a bit bizarre," said Broadmoor President Steve Bartolin. "It's just a shame that The Broadmoor is held hostage between whatever quirks exist on the state bar association's board of governors and whatever political quirks exist in the city. We're the ones getting the shun."

Denver lawyer and Colorado Bar Association President Chuck Turner said the request was never supposed to cause this much of a stir.

Bar association officials have been working behind the scenes with Isaac and City Attorney Jim Colvin for the past month in an attempt to craft a letter that would appease gay and lesbian members who are apprehensive about coming to Colorado Springs in the wake of Amendment 2.

Since the anti-gay rights amendment originated in Colorado Springs and passed by a 2-1 margin here, Turner says the city needed to take an extra step to ease perceptions that the city is intolerant of minorities.

"We haven't been demanding, we've been approaching them in a reasonable and cordial sort of way. I'm dismayed that it's gotten to this point," said Turner. "Why can't the city just say everyone's welcome, period. I can't believe it's been so hard to get what we think is a fairly easy letter."

Isaac has had the city legal staff wrestling over the language of such a statement for weeks.

The mayor apparently did not want to single out "gay and lesbian members" in his open invitation to the bar association. But Turner and Cross say that if the city doesn't make a clear policy statement that homosexuals are welcome in Colorado Springs, the group may look for another host city for its annual convention.

"The loss of the convention will have grave consequences for this community and will send the wrong message to a lot of concerned people outside of this city," Cross said.

Most City Council members are loathe to be called to the table on such a no-win issue. Privately, they say they wish Isaac would dispense with the matter before it comes to a vote.

"There are no safe or congenial political implications here," said one City Council member. "Voting for this is a nice recipe for political suicide in Colorado Springs. Voting against this means I support overt discrimination — that's another recipe for social and political suicide."

City Councilman David White sees a more insidious agenda.

"I think this is extortion," he said. "It appears to be the same kind of threat as the Celestial Seasonings thing. Instead of asking for money like the New York Boycott Colorado group, they've said, 'Send us a letter if you want us to come.' They're threatening to pull their convention from Colorado Springs. I think that's blackmail."

Turner denies any such motive.

In early January, the governing board of the association voted 53-23 to keep the convention in Colorado Springs only after Bartolin, the Broadmoor president, issued a strong statement saying the five-star hotel does not tolerate discrimination of any kind.

The Colorado Bar Association has come to The Broadmoor hotel every year for the past 75 years, with the exception of 1990 and 1992. The annual convention generates about $1 million in revenue.

cohol and tobacco pro...

Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen said Thursday that the Clinton administration was considering raising the levies on alcohol and tobacco to pay for a national health plan.

Higher alcohol and tobacco taxes were not among the $246 billion in revenue increases Clinton proposed this week in his economic recovery package.

Panetta said some of Clinton's advisers believe that a health-care reform package will produce enough savings to not only expand coverage to the uninsured, but also to reduce the budget deficit.

But the budget director said he believed that any savings would "largely have to be committed to expansion of coverage of health care itself."

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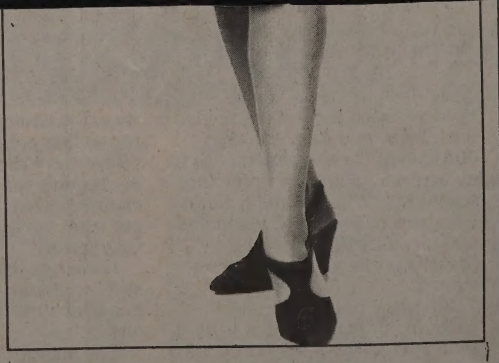

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